



Oakfield House
School



Ofsted Inspection Report

March 2018





Oakfield House School

Station Road, Salwick, Preston, Lancashire PR4 0YH

Inspection dates

27 February–1 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and executive headteacher have successfully steered the school through a period of rapid growth, while maintaining outstanding teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders are highly ambitious. They create a harmonious and safe environment in which pupils are eager to learn.
- Leaders are supported and challenged by knowledgeable and committed governors who know the school exceptionally well.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers, teaching assistants and other adults work together highly effectively to meet pupils' individual learning needs. Some middle leaders are still refining their roles in relation to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers make learning exciting, firing pupils' imagination and ensuring their full engagement in learning. Excellent procedures are in place to assess and monitor pupils' performance.
- Standards have risen since the previous inspection. All pupils make at least good, and often outstanding, progress in a wide range of subjects. However, pupils are not always fully challenged in mathematics in key stage 2.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils had made outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in a range of other subjects, including art and history.
- Pupils benefit from highly effective therapies, including 'animal therapy' and counselling, and excellent behaviour support.
- Educational trips, outward-bound activities, charitable work and visits to museums enhance the school's outstanding curriculum.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their appreciation of British values, is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They are hardly ever absent because they thoroughly enjoy coming to school.
- Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school. They say their children are happy, safe and progressing well.
- Safeguarding procedures are exemplary, comprehensive and fully understood by all staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics in key stage 2, by ensuring that teachers consistently challenge pupils to achieve their absolute best.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by providing more opportunities for middle leaders and subject specialists to refine their skills in monitoring the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is exceptionally well organised and highly ambitious. With the support of the executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher, she has ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Some areas have improved, including pupils' progress and attendance.
- Oakfield House School is very purposeful and orderly. Staff have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of pupils' academic, personal development and welfare needs. Excellent systems ensure that such needs are consistently well met in this safe and harmonious school.
- Governors know the school exceptionally well. They have afforded very effective support to senior leaders as the numbers of staff and pupils have doubled over the last two years. Governors receive detailed reports from the headteacher and are well placed to both challenge and support senior leaders, which they do in equal measure. With the full support and commitment of governors, and other schools and services within the Acorn Care and Education group, senior leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning, offering helpful advice to teachers and learning support assistants on how they can improve their practice. In addition, senior leaders check on the quality of work in pupils' books and ensure that the school's assessment and feedback policy is consistently applied. Such practices help to maintain outstanding teaching. Performance management procedures allow senior leaders to check the progress made by staff towards their challenging targets.
- Staff morale is very high. Almost all staff who completed the inspection questionnaire indicated that they are very appreciative of professional development opportunities. All those teaching have qualified teacher status or are working towards it. Senior leaders constantly encourage staff to take advantage of training to continually improve their teaching practice and subject knowledge. Staff receive regular specialised training to further their understanding of conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and other conditions which affect pupils' mental health and behaviour. This has strengthened the effectiveness of the support staff in working with pupils, which was an area for improvement in the last inspection.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are therefore eligible for additional funding. Similarly, a sizeable proportion of pupils is in the care of local authorities and so the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium. Such funding is carefully spent to provide tailored programmes of learning for each pupil and to ensure that all pupils can participate in every aspect of school life, including educational trips and visits. Inspection evidence, including the school's own assessment data, indicates that such pupils make good and often outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from an outstanding curriculum which promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils know that Britain is culturally diverse. They learn about the major world faiths, celebrate events such as Chinese New Year, and

have visited various places of worship, including a mosque and Hindu temple. Pupils enjoy art and recently participated in a 'super learning day' in which they honed their creative skills through the medium of clay. Pupils engage in mask making, as they did when they hosted their own Mardi Gras, and like to play various instruments, including the djembe (African drums). Pupils relish their outdoor learning activities in various places including Beacon Fell, enjoy challenges, such as 'bush tucker trials', and fearlessly tackle the elements in Bear Grylls-style survivalist activities. They regularly visit museums, the theatre and local places of interest and are eager to engage in random acts of kindness.

- The celebration and commemoration of notable events, such as Remembrance Day, develop pupils' appreciation of their heritage. Pupils enjoy putting democratic principles into practice as school council members and have had their say on how the school grounds should be developed, for example to include a 'MUGA' (multi use games area). Pupils raise money for charities through cake sales, washing cars and dressing up. They recently donated their old school uniforms to a school in Africa. All such activities help to develop Oakfield pupils into active and responsible citizens.
- Parents speak very highly of the school. All indicated that they are well informed about their children's progress and development. Parents said that their children enjoy school and are safe and happy. Typically, parents commented that, 'staff have excellent relationships with my child, they know exactly how he "ticks"'. Parents also said that their children's achievement is, 'phenomenal' and staff are like 'a second parent'.
- Representatives from placing authorities, including social workers, are equally positive, commenting that, 'the school is value for money', 'communication is excellent' and 'the school addresses parents' anxieties with calm reassurance'.
- Every class in Oakfield House School is full. The rapid expansion of the school and the corresponding increase in the number of staff has meant that some staff are still developing in their roles. This includes some middle managers and subject specialists. Senior leaders are acutely aware of this and are intent on capitalising on the eagerness of staff to be fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Governance

- Governors are well informed because the headteacher provides them with comprehensive termly reports. Reports are highly evaluative and provide detailed data analyses and information on several matters, including pupils' progress, attendance, staff training and work with local authorities. In addition, governors come into school regularly and have first-hand experience of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, personal development and welfare.
- The executive headteacher is highly effective in his role. He visits the school regularly and is at hand to support senior leaders and staff. Frequent meetings of headteachers and other senior leaders in the Acorn group provide a good platform for sharing good and outstanding practice.
- The chair of the governing body is especially knowledgeable, having previously been a headteacher of one of Acorn's schools. She provides useful advice and guidance and has helped senior leaders to sustain outstanding provision.

- Governors are of the view that 'nothing but the best is good enough for pupils'. They ensure that the school is 'outward facing' and periodically commission specialists to review the quality of teaching and learning and safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy published on its website.
- In this school, nothing is left to chance when it comes to safeguarding. All staff are trained well to ensure that pupils are safe from harm. Excellent systems are in place to record any concerns raised by staff. All concerns are reported quickly to appropriate authorities and parents as necessary. Designated safeguarding leads are trained to a very high standard and are expert at spotting signs of neglect and/or abuse. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough. All staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare.
- Staff are very well briefed about developments in safeguarding. All are familiar with the latest government guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education'. Their exceptionally good relationships with pupils, and the trust they have secured, ensure that pupils are confident to disclose any concerns they may have.
- Staff have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the potential dangers that these vulnerable pupils face. All are familiar with the detailed risk assessments drawn up for each pupil, the school premises and educational visits.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers, teaching assistants and other adults providing one-to-one support, counselling, behaviour support and speech therapy form an excellent team. Collectively, they have a comprehensive overview of each pupil's academic, behavioural and special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. All pupils have an ambitious, personalised learning programme which supports their outstanding progress.
- Staff know exactly how to secure pupils' engagement in learning. They are fully aware of the factors outside school that can impact on pupils' willingness to learn and behave appropriately. Staff are patient and caring. They fully understand that some pupils can be easily intimidated, while others are averse to failure. Teachers temper their planning accordingly, while maintaining their high expectations of pupils' learning.
- Teachers' perseverance routinely pays off. This was evident in a key stage 1 class where the teacher focused on developing pupils' speech, language and written communication skills. Teachers used a range of strategies to reinforce pupils' recognition of letter shapes and sounds, enabling them to form simple words and short sentences. Similarly, in a class of older pupils, the teacher developed pupils' phonic skills by presenting a series of familiar words that all could sound out and read. The teacher then extended pupils' language and reading further by introducing new words and initiating a discussion around what it might be like to be an identical twin, or triplet.

- Teachers are expert at initiating discussion and getting pupils to create interesting stories and read them, as was the case in an upper key stage 2 class. Here the teacher was able to encourage pupils, some reluctant writers, to produce interesting stories based on the 'Hansel and Gretel' fairy story. Some read picture stories while others, not confident to read their stories aloud, were happy for an adult to do so on their behalf.
- Excellent cross-curricular links are made between different subjects. This was evident in an upper key stage 2 science lesson where pupils were learning about the properties of transparent, translucent and opaque objects. The teacher skilfully linked a discussion around how light travels to the topic of shadow puppetry and the use of screens and light to enhance near and distant objects.
- Pupils are fascinated by history and topics relating to the Second World War. This is shown in their excellent work in art and design technology, which includes models of Spitfires, bomb shelters and allotments. In an upper key stage 2 history class, pupils demonstrated their excellent knowledge of life in London during the blitz. In addition, they confidently discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Spitfire and Messerschmitt aircraft and shared facts about life during the war.
- Teachers consistently adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy. The presentation and content of some books is exceptional; most pupils take pride in their work. Teachers' photo-documentation and annotation of the work of pupils still in the early stages of writing is outstanding.
- Pupils understand the importance of mathematics in everyday life. They know how it links to other subjects, including science, and to activities which canvass peoples' opinions. This was evident during the inspection as pupils collected information on each other's and staff members' favourite computer games and fictional characters. Pupils' books reveal that they regularly collate each other's opinions in different topics. Older pupils are skilled at transferring information from tables into bar charts and drawing up pie charts.
- Mathematics teaching in key stage 1 is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants' work is exemplary in how they encourage children with special educational needs, including severe autistic spectrum disorder, to engage in measuring, estimating and identifying different geometric shapes. However, mathematics teaching is not always as challenging as it could be, particularly in key stage 2, to ensure that all pupils achieve their absolute best.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff, including those who provide counselling and behaviour support, are highly skilled at developing pupils' confidence. They help pupils to find their voice, to share their ideas in class and make their views known to the school council. Sometimes pupils' special educational needs prevent them from being resilient to failure and able to learn from their mistakes. However, parents who spoke with the inspector were amazed at their children's achievements, recognising that the tiny steps their children take often represent significant accomplishments.

- Excellent transition arrangements are in place. Pupils are well prepared for their learning in secondary school. Many opportunities are available for pupils in Year 6 to visit various secondary schools, including those in the Acorn group. Older pupils said that they have no concerns about moving on to the next stage of their learning in Year 7.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after in school. They say that teachers make them feel safe, as do the keypads and security codes fitted to most doors. Pupils are very loyal to the school. They enjoy its rural setting and family atmosphere.
- Pupils' good understanding of different faiths helps to develop their appreciation of, and respect for, the culturally diverse nature of British society. This was evident in a class where they showed an excellent level of understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam. Pupils were very interested in subha beads (prayer beads) a prayer mat and other artefacts and were keen to try on a tupi (hat or cap) and abaya (traditional female clothing).
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that, 'this is the best school ever' and indicated that they are confident in speaking to any member of staff about any concerns or worries. Parents and staff who communicated with the inspector all said that the school is exceptionally safe.
- Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet. Their use of computers is strictly supervised at school. Pupils know that they should always speak to an adult if they are uncertain about the safety of a website or link.
- Pupils learn about dangers and risks through their lessons and have had talks from fire fighters and community police officers. They are encouraged to eat healthily and often prepare and eat healthy meals. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of regular exercise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff manage behaviour outstandingly well. They have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of each pupil's specific needs. This helps staff to quickly identify 'triggers' and avoid situations in which pupils feel particularly vulnerable or under pressure.
- Early interventions by staff help to ensure that there is minimal disruption to pupils' learning. Pupils who have difficulty managing their own behaviour learn to develop coping strategies. Where appropriate, pupils can refer themselves to the quiet room, or talk to a behaviour support assistant.
- Some pupils who met with the inspector found it difficult to articulate their views about the behaviour of others. However, all indicated that behaviour is usually good. Staff, parents, governors and representatives from local authorities are all of the view that behaviour is at least good. Inspection evidence, including the school's records of pupils' behaviour, indicates that behaviour is typically outstanding over time. All pupils begin to modify their behaviour as soon as they come to school and continue to improve.
- Pupils know what bullying is and say that it rarely happens. They learn about racism and homophobic bullying through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum. Pupils know that it is wrong to treat someone badly because of how they look or what they believe.

- Pupils are very curious and welcoming towards visitors. They are well presented and wear their uniforms with pride. Pupils behave sensibly throughout the school day, though some get agitated when they know lessons are coming to an end and home time is near. Pupils are well-mannered and respectful. Quite correctly, they are exceptionally proud of their achievements.
- Pupils look forward to their regular assemblies, where they are praised highly for their academic achievements, good behaviour and regular attendance. Pupils' attendance is very high and has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are rarely absent because they enjoy coming to school and recognise its importance in preparing them for the next stage of their learning after Year 6.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Almost all pupils start school with skills and abilities below those expected for their age. This includes in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of assessments, taken shortly after pupils are admitted, enable senior leaders and teachers to develop bespoke programmes of learning for each pupil.
- Pupils start school at various times during the academic year. Almost all have significant gaps in their learning. Some have been out of school for extended periods, others have attended school, or a pupil referral unit, on a part-time basis. Most pupils have SEN and/or disabilities which adversely impact on their academic, personal and social development. However, teachers have exceptionally high expectations of pupils. Inspection evidence, including the school's own data and work in pupils' books, indicates that once settled into school life, pupils make accelerated progress from their low starting points.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans. Typically, such plans include targets relating to improving pupils' communication skills and engagement in learning. Targets are regularly reviewed during meetings with school staff, local authority representatives and other interested parties, including parents. Pupils make outstanding progress to develop their speech, language and communication skills. Similarly, pupils make excellent progress to improve their basic skills in mathematics, to participate in lessons and share their views with peers.
- Highly effective phonics teaching supports pupils' rapid progress to acquire good reading and writing skills. Pupils enjoy reading. Their reading records indicate that they read frequently, both at school and at home. Pupils who read for the inspector did so with great expression. Less confident pupils used their phonic skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words. Older, more proficient readers named several favourite authors and recognised different writing genres.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is exceptionally well organised. She is trained to a very high standard and works in partnership with various specialists, including speech and language therapists and educational psychologists, to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Interventions are available for any pupil not making good progress.

- Some books indicate that pupils, especially those in key stage 1, are still in the initial stages of their learning journey. Nevertheless, good and outstanding progress is evident in relation to early mark-making and simple calculations.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in science. Pupils' workbooks contain many examples of practical activities and experiments. For example, pupils have investigated light and how it travels, explored the properties of different materials and observed chemical reactions, such as the response of different coloured sweets to contact with water. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they 'love' science and the opportunities they have to use the laboratories in the secondary schools in the Acorn group.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in other subjects, including art and design technology, as seen in their excellent models of Second World War planes, and three-dimensional pyramids. Rapid progress is made in history. Pupils' books reveal a considerable depth of understanding about ancient Egypt and the process of mummification. In geography, pupils make outstanding progress, and develop their writing skills well, as in comparing the characteristics of cities such as London and Beijing. Pupils work closely with teachers and learning support assistants to hone their word processing skills and produce highly descriptive stories.
- Older pupils experience various subjects on offer at secondary schools such as hair and beauty, horticulture and mechanical engineering, through sampling them in Acorn group schools. This gives them an insight into the requirements, skills and knowledge necessary to pursue different vocational career paths.
- A small number of pupils excel in subjects such as reading, where their reading age is well above their chronological age. Interventions for such pupils help to develop their comprehension skills and broaden their reading repertoire.
- Younger pupils make outstanding progress in most areas of mathematics, including ordering numbers, measuring and identifying geometrical shapes. Pupils are well aware of the importance of mathematics in everyday life. Recently, as part of a young enterprise project, older pupils set up their own car washing business, the proceeds of which went to the school council's choice of charity. However, older pupils do not always make the best possible progress because mathematics is not always challenging enough.

School details

Unique reference number	131666
DfE registration number	888/6037
Inspection number	10043373

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Julie Taylor
Headteacher	Paula Kitching
Executive headteacher	James Joyce
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,000
Telephone number	01772 672630
Website	oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	office@oakfieldhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–30 April 2015

Information about this school

- Oakfield House School is a specialised independent special school in Lancashire which provides for pupils aged five to 12 years who have moderate to severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered for 42 pupils. It is owned by Acorn Care and Education Ltd and was last inspected in April 2015. There are 42 pupils on roll; most pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils are placed at the school from several local authorities in the North West.

- The school brochure states: 'The children at Oakfield House have a range of educational needs, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties which have made it hard for them to cope elsewhere. For most of our children their achievements have been reflected in rapidly improved academic skills and self-confidence. Literacy and Numeracy skills have seen large improvements and our pupils are on the road to embracing learning to become independent learners that enjoy learning for life.'
- Due to the complex nature of most pupils' educational needs, support from adults is often intensive. All pupils learn in small groups. Some are educated on a one-to-one basis. All classes include pupils from different age groups.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has doubled. Some pupils follow the national curriculum. However, due to their learning difficulties, none are entered for national examinations at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Bespoke programmes of learning are available for all pupils. Most pupils have had either extended periods out of school or been on limited education programmes in other schools and pupil referral units.
- The senior leadership team has been strengthened to include a new deputy headteacher and middle leaders. The governing body has been reorganised and includes a new chair of the governing body. The headteacher is managed by an executive headteacher who is responsible for several schools in the Acorn group. New staff include a safeguarding officer, seven teachers and 12 learning support assistants. A middle management team is being developed.
- Premises have been extended to include several new classrooms to meet the demands of increasing numbers of pupils. In May 2017, the Acorn group's chief executive opened a new classroom and outdoor learning area for the school's youngest pupils.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning across all key stages and in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. All observations were made jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' work was scrutinised during observations and separately.
- One-to-one teaching sessions and small-group activities were observed. The inspector listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with various senior leaders, including those responsible for safety and safeguarding. Meetings were also held with a behaviour support worker and school counsellor. The inspector met with a group of staff.
- Questionnaires submitted by 26 members of staff were scrutinised. There were too few responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. The inspector considered the school's own surveys of parents' views and held telephone conversations with parents and local authority representatives.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils from across the school. The school's own surveys of pupils' views were considered.
- The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included checks on the quality of teaching; safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments; various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour; development plans and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's reviews of its own performance.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
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Better days, Better lives